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THE DOLOROUS BLADE

Being A Brief Account of the Adventures of
that good Knight of the Round Table
SIR BALIN, called "Le Savage"

Done into Rhyme by

SAMUEL DONALD NEWTON





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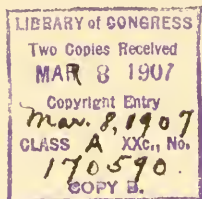
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The Gorham Press, Boston

TO M. W. G.

I would I had some rhyme, Sweet, fit to grace
Those magick letters shadowing thy name
Which I—too bold—have ventured here to place
Upon my book: our book; for now, fair dame,
Thou art at last my partner ('tis a shame
'Twere not more worthy) and an lovest me
Thou'lt so continue, for, than all the fame
Parnassus holds, 'twere sweeter if it be
That thou canst smile on this I dedicate to thee.

THE DOLOROUS BLADE

I

Anon, it came to pass that at the court
Appeared a damsel, wondrous fair, who wore
About her waist (indeed it were no sport
To be accoutred thus, and passing sore
It burdened her) a belt from which she bore
A lordly sword, encrusted thick with gold
And jewels bright, of which she would implore
Some knight to her relieve, if one so bold
Were found who from that shieve could draw the
blade so cold.

II

“ But he must be a knight of guileless name,”
Declared the maid, “ None other need assay—
’Twere no avail—past many halls I came
But nowhere found the knight (alas, the day!)
Could draw this brand.” King Arthur cried
 straightway
“ ’Tis well, for many knights of marlous worth
Here live, and at this court where I hold sway
One must be found, if such there be on earth
Who can remove this grievous weight from round
 thy girth!”

III

He said: then on the hilt he placed his hand
And gave a mighty pull—alas, in vain!
And after him all barons of the land
Each vainly strove; but not a knight could gain
The sword, until the weary maid was fain
Seek other courts: at last Sir Balin tried
(The meanest of all knights, who bore the stain
Of being pris'ner:) see the blade now glide
Quickly from out the shieve when he his hand
applied.

IV

Much marvel had the king and all the court
That one so lowly knight should have achieved
When all other had failed (for 'tis no tort
To wear coarse garments if the heart hath cleaved
E'er to the good). Straightway the king reprieved
Sir Balin's durance, saying they did ill
Who wronged so true a knight: but some were
grieved
At his preferment, and men's ears would fill
With stories that he drew the sword by witchcraft's
will!

V

Sir Balin, when he looked upon the blade,
Was wondrous pleased therewith, and would have
ta'en

The scabbard too, an that he could; the maid,
Howe'er, held to't and straightway did complain,
"Give up the sword:" but Balin said again,
"Nay, that I will not, till in open fight
One wins it from me, or that I am slain;
And wield I ever will this sword with might
To undo evil and to repossess the right!"

VI

The maid replied: “ ’Twere better not, sir knight,
For from this steel, an that you it withhold,
Much ill is fated, since in grievous plight
’Twill bathe your nearest friend (for you’re too
bold)

In his own life-blood: and it hath been told
That he the stroke most dolorous ever known
Must strike, who wields this blade: and ere hath
rolled

One year from now his life will have been blown
Into the vast unseen: give back the sword I own!”

VII

But Balin answered only "I have said,"
And strode from Camelot: I will not stay
To tell how that the king turned flaming red
That one his knight should rush so rude away
Nor how he grieved at what the maid did say;
Nor will I stop to hear the lying tale
How Balin slew a lady fair that day
(Averting witchcraft:) for we must not fail
To follow quick the knight as he his path may
scale.

VIII

Now, this Sir Balin was but rudely found,
His chain-mail rusty and his target lost,
No banneret above him and the sound
Of his poor charger's jaded footsteps crossed
The ear but meanly: no proud feather tossed
Upon his helm, which battered was with flaw;
Yet in his gauntlet was the blade embossed,
The magic sword which he alone could draw:
His saddle held a spirit bound by no weak law!

IX

“ Sir Balin le Savage, now dress thyself:
'Tis Lanceor of Ireland calleth thee,
Fresh from King Arthur's court, where thou by
 pelf
Won that fair sword which in thy hand I see
And with it slew a damsel guiltily
To thy soul's hurt; then left the court alone,
Without the king's consent, which all agree
Is treachery vile, whereat the king makes moan
And hath sent me, his knight, who call his cause
 mine own!”

X

Sir Balin turned: a glittering sight he saw;
A knight in brightest armor habited
On which the sun lay dazzling: not a flaw
In gold or silver plate there was; instead
A mirrored surface: on a steed well bred,
Of purest white, whose trappings swept the ground,
He pranced, and as he nearer drew the dread
Device upon his lordly shield was found,
The badge of Erin, golden harp of mellow sound!

XI

“Thou liest bravely, prince!” Sir Balin cried;
“I slew no damsel in King Arthur’s halls;
Here on my troth as knight it is denied;
Nor gained I this keen sword by pelf; those walls,
If they could speak, despite the grievous falls
Of mighty knights before me, would allow
I won it fairly; this my spirit palls
At treacherous deed, and rightly knowest thou
I left King Arthur under leave: have at thee now!”

XII

They met together in the middle plain
With mighty clash of arms: the good yew lance
That Balin bore the other's shield did gain
And laid him low, but Lanceor's just did glance
The tip of Balin's helm, as it did dance
Before his eyes, and left him whole; with speed
Leaped Balin from the saddle and askance
He flashed the dolorous blade: there was no need,
For Lanceor's spirit with a grievous wound did
 bleed.

XIII

Anon, as Balin mourned that he should be
The death of this so good a lord and knight
And pondered if this were the stroke that he
Were doomed to strike when first that blade he
dight,

There came a damsel, passing fair to sight,
With floating locks unkempt and streaming eyes,
Her garments disarrayed, her figure slight
Trembling with grief; herself upon the prize
Flinging where now her noble lord and lover dies!

XIV

Then quickly she upstarted, in her hand
Sir Lanceor's bright sword, which Balin tried
To take from her anon, but she the brand
Clung to the closer and his suit denied
Till he was fain desist for that she cried
As though in pain: then she the falchion set,
The hilt stuck fast i' the earth (again she sighed,
While Balin stood aghast) and last she let
Her soul depart, as, falling, she the cold steel met!

XV

Much moan made Balin o'er the untimely fate
Of this fair damsel and this noble lord
Who loved so dearly other and who wait
Together now before the door which barred
The realms of Paradise: him seemed 'twere hard
That such a mournful venture should be first
To meet his late-recovered arms, ill-starred,
And well he knew now till he durst
Some noblest deed, his name at Arthur's court
were curst.

XVI

Anon, as thus he mourned, he was made ware
Of Merlin, the great wizard, who would sore
Upbraid him for the mischance happened there
Whereby so fair a maid was bathed i' the gore
Of her own heart, which mightily he swore
Sir Balin should have stopped: then thus he spoke:
“Curst be this spot, for here a fearful score
Wiil 'tween the two best knights on earth be broke
(Yet neither shall draw blood from other's heart
of oak!)

XVII

Be this spot known the vilest under heaven,
For here the Dolorous Blade in anger first
By man on man was drawn, and here were riven
Two souls from out their bodies; here shall burst
Full many noble hearts: forever curst
Be this dread spot! Take up yon sword, sir knight,
For thou hast need of two such, thou who durst
The Dolorous Blade so wield: full many a fight
Thou'lt know, ere that descends on thee the end-
less night!

XVIII

Take up Sir Lanceor's sword, for thou in strife
Must wound the man most worshipful now known,
Whereby three realms, in wretchedness all rife,
Twelve years must mourn, and he, this man, shall
moan

Full many years ere that be overgrown
His hurt: take up the sword, sir knight, for nigh
Approaches Balan, thy twin brother, blown
To thee: thy nearest kin; he who did lie
With thee in cradled infancy: with thee must die!"

XIX

“ A truce to gloomy prophecies, sir seer;
I trust them not,” said Balin, “else would I
Cause yet another life (to me more dear)
Expire o’ this sword: as did this maiden die,
I’d follow her, to prove your words a lie:
Yet truly would I my own brother see!”
“ Look up!” said Merlin, nor could he deny
That Balan stood there, like as he could be
To his own self, save that in better harness he.

XX

Long stood they thus together, gazing mute
Each at the other: last, Sir Balan spoke:
“ Aye, truly heard I that they did transmute
Your chains to liberty, your bitter yoke
To victory, in Arthur’s halls, the cloak
Of knighthood giving back, and hasted then
To greet my brother gladly as he woke
From his long thralldom, taking among men
The place his errant knighthood gives him once
again!”

XXI

To whom Sir Balin: “ Softly, brother; see,
Full bitter deeds my first return to arms
Have crowned: and here is Merlin who on me
Hath worser things denounced: full of alarms
He’s filled my life; but I will prove his harms
(God willing) false: yet would I gladly know
Where I may find, full-coursing o’er his farms,
In rage defiant, Arthur’s bitterest foe:
To gain his grace, I’d make a giant’s blood to
 flow!”

XXII

Again spake Merlin: "Him can I supply:
One hight Rience of Gore, of North-Wales lord,
A most vile monarch (none can it deny)
And pagan, who for many years hath warred
With thrice five kings his vassals, falchion scarred
Against King Arthur, and who now doth plot
A quick invasion of the land, ill-starred,
Unneath 'tis stopped and the leader caught!"
"We'll take the venture," cried they, "'gainst this
man distraught!"

XXIII

The great King Arthur sat upon his throne,
Fair-featured Guenevere close by his side,
While down the hall in ever widening zone
Were ranged the lords who at the court abide
And knights o' the Table Round; when with a
stride

Up to the dais, his black lance reversed,
Approached, grief shaken, trembling with the tide
Of human woe which all his soul immersed,
North-Wales' fierce lord, great Arthur's bitterest
foe and worst.

XXIV

Down on the floor he bent his haughty knees
And 'twixt our king's fair palms his gnarled hands
In homage passed, while saying it did please
Two knights who were his victors such commands
To place on him: two doughty knights: there
 stands
None in these halls their peers, as he might think,
Not even Launcelot, whose fame expands
(He said) with Christendie, and would not shrink
At any limits, stretching to the earth's last brink!

XXV

That he had sixty coursers in his train,
Well armed and fearless as on earth do ride,
And was himself a knight (if he could gain
Aught by such idle boast) whom no ill tide
Had e'er before o'erwhelmed, but when they vied,
These sixty with the twain, they scattered were
And he was bound: and yet these knights did hide
Their true names from him: one of them howe'er,
Within each mighty hand a flashing sword did bear

XXVI

Which he full nobly wielded and did fight
On either hand a foe, as though, indeed,
Two souls he had and each a belted knight
With perfect purpose, from the other freed.
A message gave they him, which he should heed
And now delivered, for it seemed that they
Offended had, and by some luckless deed,
Against their king, and therefore far they stray
Until they're pardoned, for which guerdon now
they pray!

XXVII

King Arthur cried: " We graciously agree
This pardon to, their damage be what may,
For ne'er our royal heart withholds rich fee
From those who service such as this can pay
Unto their king: there vacant stand today
Two seats o' the Table Round, which they must
fill,

And that they are not now o' that rank and sway,
As much I think they are: but I could will
To know their names and cognizance of herald's
quill."

XXVIII

And Balan heard the summons and his way
Took to the court, for long the wilderness
Had been his home: but Balin answered nay,
For God's deep wildwood (so he did confess)
Called him afar and he resolved to press
To greater victories, if there were more
Ordained for him; yet none, I'm told, the less
Fair Arthur gained a knight, for he of Gore
A valiant vassal proved, in bloody fights a score.

XXIX

And for six moons erred Balin and he knew
A thousand knightly deeds of willing aid
To sorrow-stricken damsels: he o'erthrew
Ten mighty giants with his dolorous blade
And seven with the other: well he played
His part, and soon of lesser knights a train
Him followed, and with them he did invade
Far distant parts of Britain, and did gain
His fill of glory; yet without one honor-stain.

XXX

But still, withal, where'er he went, he felt
A hidden impulse to review the ground
Where brave Sir Lanceor died and where did melt
With his the damsel's soul, for that the sound
Of Merlin's gruesome warning did redound
Within his brain and drew him from afar,
As birds come back in springtime to the mound
Where they had nested erst, or as the star
Returns each night on darkening of the sun's
 bright car.

XXXI

So, after six month's tarrying, he came
And, lo, a great, flat stone concealed the spot,
'Neath which had Merlin, by his wiles and flame,
Reposed the dead; and o'er the stone there fought
Two doughty knights, whose warfare set at naught
All fighting else, so fierce it was and wild;
Yet Balin noted that none blood was brought
For all the blows that each on other piled
In weary multitude and wealth unreconciled!

XXXII

“Why strive ye, knights?” cried Balin, as he
neared

The scene of combat, but none answer they
Save more redoubled blows: then Balin feared,
For true came Merlin’s prophesy that day
And Balin knew full well there were no way
But that the rest must follow: still there fell
The feast of blows, nor could he force a stay
Till that they both sank back, their mighty swell
Of fierceness spent, and yet the bards no victory
tell.

XXXIII

Then off came helmets: what is this they saw?
'Twas Launcelot and Tristram Lyoness,
The two best knights of Christendie, the awe
Of Moors, who each for other might confess
Such love as all love otherwise were less,
Save for their lady-queens; but each was clad
In stranger cognizance and unwont dress,
So that they knew not other, but had bade
Defiance bold, as ever 'twixt strange knights is had.

XXXIV

These knights craved Balin stay and take good
cheer,
For they had heard his prowess whom all own
As third in true and chivalrous career,
Next to themselves, and they would fain have
known
Him better, but he begged to be alone,
For that the sayings of the wizard still
Rang in his ears, and he would pray the Throne
Whereon's the King of kings to steel his will
Ere that the time were come those sayings to fulfil.

XXXV

So Balin prayed and after slowly passed
Upon his way; dire were his thoughts and strange,
Like to Childe Roland's when he found at last
The dark tower road: one knight alone might range
With him; the bearded Heleus, (a change
From all the pompous, almost kingly train
Was wont to follow him o'er field and grange,
His vassals all.) Him, too, Sir Balin fain
Would have dismissed, but that he sorely begged
 remain.

XXXVI

'Twas then, as passed these knights o'er moor and
field

In silence (for that Balin's soul was dumb
With heavy musings) one behind cried "Yield!"
And at the word his horse's clatterings come
With quick resounding: Heleus' frame grew numb
With fear uncanny, as were ghost anigh,
But Balin turned and siezed his lance aplumb,
And dressed himself; yet could he naught descry
To cause alarm, though still the clashing hoof-
beats fly!

XXXVII

Then Heleus fell, sore-pierced to the heart
And from the rear, as by a caitiff lance
Held by some dastard, daring not the part
Of honest knight, who never strikes askance
(As churls are fain!) yet still to Balin's glance
None foe appeared: for why? A magic cloak
He wore, which him with darkness did enhance
And hid from view: Sir Balin dealt a stroke
Deep with the Dolorous Blade, though naught its
 passage broke!

XXXVIII

But when he struck again, would not await
The recreant such another, but did fly
Far off the field, still in his darkened state
Of cowardice. Sir Balin loud did cry:
“ Full vengeance deal thou, vengeance, Lord on
high!
Against this demon who thus foully takes
Another's life in combat false: may I
The instrument the great Creator makes
To right this damage be: such form mine office
takes!”

XXXIX

And Garlon heard (for so the fiend was called,
Or man with fiendish sprite, who Heleus broke,)
And 'neath his caitiff veil which him enthralled
He shook like aspen leaf; but one word, spoke
Within Sir Balin's breast, (" 'Tis well!") awoke
Rejoicings there: still, many times anon
The knight and fiend encountered and the yoke
Of death full many comrade squires must don
Ere rich-deserved revenge might be by Balin won.

XL

There was a boy, half risen to man's years,
And yet more girl than boy, for woman's art
Alone had kept him, chased away his fears
And cherished him as prompts a woman's heart:
His aspect thus; the hair in midst y-part
O'er's forehead framed his dimpled cheeks in curls,
Hung round his shoulders, drooping soft and
smart
Down to a waist trim yet as any girl's,
A waist enroped round with dreamy, deep-sea
pearls;

XLI

His garments, sheer and light, in ample folds,
Shaped like a maid's, for exercise unfit,
Approached his ivory ankles (whose fair molds
Seemed formed for dancing) and therethrough
might flit

Visions of graceful limbs, well-formed and knit,
Revealed, yet hidden: his fair face above,
As yet unmarked with beard, with frankness lit,
Showed truth unmasked, candor, maiden love
And gentleness to reign in's mind, all else above.

XLII

Sir Balin, passing by with princely train
(His fasting o'er) beheld the lovely boy
Hard by the roadside, but a look of pain
Did cloud his face and his fair being cloy,
For in his hand he held a broken toy;
A robin, limp and pierced to the heart
By a sharp arrow, all the lively joy
Y-spilt and wasted by the feathered dart,
O'er which the lad made moan and bitter tears
upstart.

XLIII

“ What ails the silly bird,” bewailed the youth,
“ That it none flutters, as it did anon
Up in the tree? Alas, mine heart is ruth
(It were so happy) now its joy be gone!
It was so fair a mark to shoot upon
Mine arrow left my hand ere I had thought:
I meant no harm, nor thought its orison
Would so y-stop; what is’t mine hand hath
wrought
That silent woe hath thus its joyaunce pure dis-
traught?”

XLIV

“ ’Tis dead!” said Balin. “ Dead!” cried
Galahad:

“ What is’t to die; this thing ye call death?
Must all it suffer, and must all that’s glad
Thus turn to sorrow?” “ So the good Book
saith,”

Said Balin: “ All must render up their breath
When He us calls, and so our naked souls,
Bright with our knightly deeds, or sunk aneath
Our guilty ones, must go where He unrolls
The scrip of Fate and grace or doom to us out-
doles!”

XLV

All while the youth, fair Galahad, had bent
Low to the ground his head, but at this speech
Back threw his erring curls that so had strent
Around his cheeks; then did his eyes upreach
To see the speaker; but when through the breach
Thus made, he saw the panoply so grand
Arrayed afore him, straight he 'gan beseech
Kind mercy for his faults, for that the band
He thought were Seraphim who round the Lord
do stand

XLVI

(So bright were they) and Balin that Dread One
None dare name lightly: then, "Oh, God!" he
cried:

"Call me not God," said Balin, "as the sun
Is brighter than the dark, or as the bride
Is blither than the widow, by so wide
A gulph the Master better is than I
Who am His slave. A belted knight, I ride
Forth His great Will to do or else to die
As He may need my service or my life apply!"

XLVII

“ A knight!” cried Galahad; “and dost thou ride
O’er earth the wrong to cancel, joy to bring?

Art thou such knight?” “ ’Tis so I try,” replied

The other. “ Dost thou know our lord the king?

Could I be one like thee? Oh, could I string

Such falchion from my belt as are thy twain?”

“ Yea,” answered he, “ God-willing, that same
thing

Thou’lt be eftsoons!” Nor did the child remain

But “ I’ll ask Mother!” calling, tripped he o’er
the plain.

XLVIII

Sir Balin followed: soon, a stately tower
Rose o'er the treetops: as the keep they neared
The wide portcullis fell with grating power
And in the slowly oping door appeared
A lady and an one whose long, gray beard
Pronounced him Merlin, and between the twain
Smiled little Galahad, whose face, upreared,
Besought a kiss, got one, besought again,
Till that the dame must blush and discontent must
feign.

XLIX

That night slept Balin in the hall, but ere
He, of his arms undight, had gone to rest
The wizard Merlin made his side and there
Warned him in words that near to orders pressed
How he should act, and thus his charge addressed:
“ Ask not the child; too soon, thy journeys o’er,
Thou nearest that sad battle when thy breast,
Pierced by cold steel, shall beat, ah, nevermore,
Till that the angel’s trump shall call thee from
death’s shore!”

L

“ Ask not the child! His time hath not appeared,
 Nor can the mother spare her one bright flower
 Yet from her side: but when his prime hath
 neared

Then shall he be such man as evil's power
 Can never sully: such as in his hour
 Shall ne'er surpassed be in martial feat:
 A maiden knight: and those dark clouds that
 lower

Around the dolorous stroke thine hand shalt mete
 His faith will scatter and to dolour bring defeat!”

LI

So Balin on the morrow thanked the dame
 For her kind welcome and his steps addressed
 Upon his way, although, with eyes aflame
 With childhood's tears, the boy behind him
 pressed
 And begged be taken. Balin, travelling west,
 Again met Garlon and another knight
 By churlish stroke was lost: but Balin, stressed
 By passion, urged his charger day and night,
 Taught by those sounds which Garlon's cloak
 could not enblight .

LII

On, on, through weary city and through town,
Through tangled thickets, over grassy plain,
Past towers and hovels, hills with hazel crown
And vales with rivers threaded, nor could gain
One pace the dastard, under murder's bane,
Upon the true knight, though he could not see,
Till that, some castle nearing, Garlon fain
Threw off the cloak of darkness, for that he
Would seek admittance thereto, from his foe be
free!

LIII

Now there was tourney in King Pellam's court
And all the knights fro' all the country round
Engathered were to take their hand i' th' sport,
Each hoping to be mighty victor found,
The others vanquished and himself fair crowned;
So that Sir Balin entered unforbid
(Unknown as one who Garlon's steps did hound—
The king's own cousin) and, as others did,
He to a chamber passed, from all his purpose hid.

LIV

There he endight a scarlet festal gown
With gold embroidered, for the feast in hall
Was serving, nor had any yet gone down
Unto the lists; but when they him did call
To lay his weapon by (for so they all)
Fro's right the Dolorous Blade unbuckled he,
But at his left, beneath his outer shawl,
Kept close the other sword, for that in fee
He knew not when he'd need such falchion griev-
ously.

LV

Now this King Pellam was a man of worth
 (How foul his cousin were;) of charity
 And worship none were more, for he by birth
 Descent could trace, and by a noble tree,
 Fro' him that Joseph hight of Arim'thee,
 Who owned the tomb where they our Lord did lay
 In distant Judah, and 'twere none but he
 Might first enplant in Apostolic day
 The seed of Christian faith in yon fair British clay.

LVI

And he brought there with him the Holy Grail,
The lance wherewith our Master's side were smote
And other relics, which he did not fail
To give his son, whose whole life were devote
To their safe-keeping: so in time they mote
Come down to Pellam; who this castle reared
For their more sure protection, as is wrote
Fair in his life (oh, that it were besmeared
With harboring a dastard knight, and foully
feared!)

LVII

An holy castle 'twere, whose flaming arch
Seemed girt with rainbow hues, whose bastions
wide

Did glow with light, e'en as the skies in March
When fair Aurora from the north doth glide
Anent the sky: it were as though the pride
Of new Jerusalem to earth were brought
And there established, ne'er to be espied
Save with such reverence as the priests have taught
Is due to Mother Church, by pious footsteps sought.

LVIII

King Pellam, rising in his eastern chair,
Had scarce begun his welcome when espied
Base Garlon noble Balin sitting there:
Then 'fore the court (may ill him e'er betide!)
Strode he with flaming face to th' farther side
And dealt with back o's hand an angry blow
Across Sir Balin's face, who might not bide
But drew the Irish sword and laid him low
Dead i' the dust, a fee well earned and long ago.

LIX

“ Thus to all traitors!” Balin cried and strove,
With flaming face and trembling lips, the deed
To the dark, muttering crowd (a savage drove)
To justify; but Pellam, taking lead,
Defiance offered him who thus caused bleed
A foeman in a peaceful house: a pike
Then siezing (for so wrath ’gainst right would plead)
He cut the knight, who fain a blow would strike
But ’gainst a column brake his broadsword, folly-
like!

LX

Thus armless fled Sir Balin from the room
(Pressed by the king who brandished pike in hand)
On, ever onward, through the dismal gloom,
Fro' hall to entrance, through the throne room
grand,

'Neath archways mighty, up the stair's wide band,
Past fifty chambers and then back again,
O'er barracks where dull yeomen gaping stand;
'Neath turrets where blunt warders sentry feign,
Without one stop, yet nowhere could he blade
attain!

LXI

Through all the castle Balin fled, nor would
The monarch give him rest till that he gained
A golden door beneath an onyx hood
Which oping, there he found a lance, Blood-
stained
And time-dulled, near a grail round which re-
mained
An halo (sacred cup). This lance he took
His right hand in, although the staff him pained
As 'twere electric, and it fiercely shook
Before King Pellam: then the Dolorous Blow he
strook!

LXII

Sad stroke! Sad cause! That this so holy wood
Had pierced a Savior's side and caused to flow
The mingled Blood and water which has stood
A sign to all who peace and calm would know
Throughout the ages, with such deadly blow
In human quarrel now must wielded be!
Alas! When will that peace 'mongst men below
Prevail, He taught His saints in Galilee?
'Tis for this peace, oh Lord, Thou see'st our bended
knee!

LXIII

Down fell the castle, beam from beam distrent,
An hundred knights and ladies crushing there
Aneath the wreckage, through the wicked bent
Of Garlon slain: but, lo, and angel bare
That cup and lance aloft till that some fair
And virtuous life should them regain to men.
King Pellam lay in swoond, but he, the slayer
Of wicked Garlon, lived and found again,
Unhurt, his Dolorous Blade and so passed o'er
the fen.

LXIV

Sir Balin left the place of grief, bowed low
With sorrow: through a weary land he strode
Where wretched men and raving maids in woe
Called out to him: "Oh, Balin, see the goad
Thou'st fitted to our necks!" The very road,
Now thick with rocks that erst so lovely were,
Seemed to distrust him and to the abode
Of weariness him led, and e'en the air
With sulphurous gas was dark that erst had been
so fair!

LXV

At last Sir Balin at a river ford
Met with a stranger knight who would the way
Dispute, and fiercely each to each they scored
Deep with their steel, until the weary day
Drew to a close, and so a forced stay
Came to their tired arms: then, helmets off,
Each laid him down to die: too long delay:
Lo, Balan! who a stranger helm did doff
That he with Balin travel might through Death's
dark slough!

LXVI

And so the Wizard's prophesy came true
And Balin by his best friend's hand was slain;
His brother's own: today, a mighty yew
Grows o'er the grave where each were slowly ta'en
And laid together; and the yellow grain
Nods round the spot: oh, shed a bitter tear
For these two bretheren, stranger, when you gain
This solemn place, and one short prayer uprear
That yonder they may know a happier fate than
here!

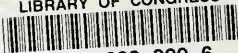
LXVII

It may hap, friend, thy later years shall be,
Like Balin's, lost through cold, remorseless fate,
And that thine hand, unwitting, earn his fee:
But, come what may, do thou both early, late,
Portray his spotless life: ne'er be the state
Of Garlon thine: and harbor not thou ill
Within thine hall, as did King Pellam great:
Then, if thy life be short, remember still
Another, grander life lies 'yond Death's sluggish
rill.

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